

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) ~~What is claimed and desired to be secured by letters patent is as follows:~~

A tufted surface covering, comprising:

a base formed from particles of a polymer compound mixed with a quantity of a particle binding agent, said particle binding agent causing a portion of said particles to bind together;

said base having an upper surface and a lower surface; and

said base being tufted through with a tufting material to form a plurality of spaced apart tufting material tufts on said base upper surface and a plurality of spaced apart tufting material loops on said base lower surface.

2. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 1, wherein:
- said polymer compound has thermosetting characteristics; and
- following tufting, said particles are joined together at a temperature of from about 100° C to about 220° C and a pressure of up to about 2 tons per square inch.
3. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 2, wherein:
- said thermosetting polymer compound is selected from ~~a~~ the group consisting ~~essentially~~ of: a vulcanized natural rubber, a synthetic rubber and mixtures thereof.

4. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 3, wherein:
said thermosetting polymer compound is selected from a the group consisting ~~essentially~~ of: nitrile-butadiene rubber, styrene-butadiene rubber, ethylene propylene difunctional monomer copolymer, ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, polyvinyl chloride, polychloroprene, polyurethane and mixtures thereof.
5. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 2, wherein:
said particle binding agent comprises a cross-linking agent.
6. (Currently Amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 5, wherein:
said cross-linking agent is selected from a the group consisting ~~essentially~~ of:
sulphur, zinc oxide, dibutyl thiurea thiourea, tellurium diethyldithiocarbonate, ethylene propylene difunctional monomer copolymer, ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, polypropylene and mixtures thereof.
7. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 2, wherein:
said particle binding agent comprises a polar polymer containing compound.
8. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 7, wherein:
said polar polymer containing compound is selected from a the group consisting ~~essentially~~ of: a polyurethane, ethylene propylene difunctional monomer copolymer, ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, a polyamide, polypropylene, latex

and mixtures thereof.

9. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 2, wherein:
said base further includes a compound selected from the group consisting
essentially of a plasticizer, stearic acid, an ultraviolet radiation stabilizer, zinc
oxide, carbon black, calcium carbonate, talc and mixtures thereof.
10. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 2, wherein said tufting
material is selected from the group consisting essentially of: a polyamide, a polyester, a
polypropylene, a natural fiber and mixtures thereof.
11. (Original) A tufted surface covering, comprising:
a first layer formed from particles of a polymer compound mixed with a quantity
of a particle binding agent, said particle binding agent causing a portion of said
particles to bind together;
said first layer having an upper surface and a lower surface;
said first layer being tufted through with a tufting material to form a plurality of
spaced apart tufting material tufts on said first layer upper surface and a plurality
of spaced apart tufting material loops on said first layer lower surface;
a second layer having an upper surface and a lower surface, said second layer
including particles of a polymer mixed with a quantity of a particle binding agent;
and

said particle binding agent causes a portion of said first layer lower surface particles to join together with a portion of said second layer upper surface particles to seal said tufts and said loops in said first layer.

12. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 11 wherein:
said polymer compounds have thermosetting characteristics; and
following tufting, said particles are joined together at a temperature of from about 100°C to about 220°C and a pressure of up to about 2 tons per square inch.
13. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein:
each of said thermosetting polymer compounds is selected from ~~a~~ the group consisting ~~essentially~~ of: a vulcanized natural rubber, a synthetic rubber and mixtures thereof.
14. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 13, wherein:
each of said thermosetting polymer compounds is selected from ~~a~~ the group consisting ~~essentially~~ of: nitrile-butadiene rubber, styrene-butadiene rubber, ethylene propylene difunctional monomer copolymer, ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, polyvinyl chloride, polychloroprene, polyurethane and mixtures thereof.
15. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein:

each of said particle binding agents comprises a cross-linking agent.

16. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 15, wherein:
each of said cross-linking agents is selected from a the group consisting
essentially of: sulphur, zinc oxide, dibutyl ~~thiurea~~ thiourea, tellurium
diethyldithiocarbonate, ethylene propylene difunctional monomer copolymer,
ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, polypropylene and mixtures thereof.
17. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein:
each of said particle binding agents comprises a polar polymer-containing
compound.
18. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 17, wherein:
each of said polar polymer-containing compounds is selected from the group
consisting essentially of: polyurethane, ethylene propylene difunctional
monomer copolymer, ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, a polyamide,
polypropylene, latex and mixtures thereof.
19. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein:
each of said first layer and said second layers further includes a compound
selected from the group consisting of: a plasticizer, stearic acid, an ultraviolet
radiation stabilizer, zinc oxide, carbon black and calcium carbonate, talc and

mixtures thereof.

20. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein said second layer includes a blowing agent.

21. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein said second layer lower surface includes a plurality of spaced indentations for reducing a weight of the covering.

22. (Currently amended) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein said tufting material is selected from the group consisting essentially of: a polyamide, a polyester, a polypropylene, a natural fiber and mixtures thereof.

23. (Original) The tufted surface covering of claim 12, wherein said first and second layers each include a plurality of spaced apart apertures for draining a fluid from said surface covering.

24. (Original) A method of making a tufted surface covering, comprising the steps of:
providing a base formed from particles of a thermosetting polymer compound
mixed with a quantity of a particle binding agent, said particle binding agent
causing a portion of said particles to bind together;
said base having an upper surface and a lower surface; and

threading a needle with a tufting material and inserting the needle through said base at spaced intervals to form a series of tufting material tufts on said base upper surface and a series of tufting material loops on said base lower surface.

25. (Original) The method according to claim 24, said particle binding agent comprising a cross-linking agent, and including the step of:

after step (c), subjecting said base to a temperature of from about 100°C to about 220°C and a pressure of up to about 2 tons per square inch to join said particles together.

26. (Original) The method according to claim 25, including the steps of:

coating said base lower surface and loops with particles of a polymer compound mixed with a quantity of a binding agent to form a second layer; and permitting a portion of said base particles to join together with a portion of said second layer particles and seal said tufts and said loops in said first layer.

27. (Original) The method according to claim 26, each of said particle binding agents comprising a cross-linking agent and including the step of:

after step (b), subjecting said covering to a temperature of from about 100°C to about 220°C and a pressure of up to about two tons per square inch to cause a portion of said base particles to join together with a portion of said second layer particles.

28. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 27, said second layer further including an upper surface and a lower surface, and including the step of:
heating said tufted surface covering from said second layer lower surface.
29. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 28, including the step of:
while heating said tufted surface covering, at the same time cooling said tufts to protect the tufting material from the heat.